

## **Regional Weed Seed-Free Forage Products Order June 20, 2005**

**Background:** On June 20, 2005 Deputy Regional Forester Richard Stem signed a new closure order regarding the use of forage products on all national forests and grasslands in the Rocky Mountain Region. The order outlines specific requirements for the use and transport of hay, hay cubes, straw, pellets, grain, etc.

**Regionally consistent:** The previous weed seed-free closure order (1997) prohibited non-certified forage products on national forests and grasslands in Colorado and Wyoming only. A separate order (2000), covered the Black Hills National Forest. The new closure order applies to all forests and grasslands in all five Rocky Mountain Region states (CO, KS, NE, SD, and WY). Areas which were not subject to previous closure orders, but which are now be subject to weed seed-free forage requirements include: Nebraska National Forest, Buffalo Gap National Grassland, Oglala National Grassland, Ft Pierre National Grassland, and Cimarron National Grassland.

**Other changes from the previous orders:** The new closure order requires that individual units (bales, sacks, etc) of forage products be marked with the approved label from the state of origin. Previously it had been acceptable to carry field certification forms, or other documents, in lieu of individual bale or sack tags. This was problematic because such forms were easily transferable and could be saved and illegally re-used as documentation for non-certified products.

Unlike the previous closure order, the new closure differentiates between pelleted and cubed products, and also deals with the issue of **feed grains**.

1. Hay cubes: the new order allows the use of **hay cubes** only when made from certified hay (hay can be traced back to a certified Weed Seed Free field).
2. Pelleted feeds: the new closure order allows pellets. (Note: by definition, pelleting implies a grinding and heating process, which greatly reduces or eliminates the amount of exotic weed seed. Certification is not required.
3. Feed grains: the new order allows **steam-rolled grains**, which are available in most all feed stores. It prohibits uncertified grain feeds.

**Summary:** For many years, the weed seed free forage closure has been one of the most important prevention and education efforts of our invasive plants program. Adoption of the improved closure order will achieve better public understanding, and add the clarity needed to enhance the legal enforceability of this important prevention tool.